

# **COLD WEATHER/ADDITIONAL EXPENSES**

## **(Feedback from JBER COLA Town Halls)**

- Snow removal/blowers/shovels
  - Requirement to snow/shovel drive ways/side walks
- Snow cleats or spikes
  - For safety reasons, snow cleats/spikes are a “must-purchase” here during winter.
- Routine maintenance for vehicles
  - What’s recommended for maintenance/tune-up are required earlier or more often due to harsh environments and extreme cold weather
- Children’s Extraneous School/Activities Fees
  - Boys/Girl Scouts fees here are \$375 for trips, when it’s less the \$200 in CONUS
  - Intramural Sports cost a fee of at least \$205 for children to play basketball, volleyball, etc., when it only costs \$50 in CONUS
  - Summer Camps costs \$600 here compared to CONUS \$125
  - High School Students’ School Parking Fee \$55 because of the need to clear parking lots during winter
  - Driver’s Ed costs at least \$600 here
  - Ortho or other medical referral services out-of-pocket cost is 50% higher here, and Tricare won’t adjust costs for this location
  - School lunches average anywhere from \$9-12 a day per child
- Recreational Items
  - The normal sports such as soccer are not often played here, service members engage in fishing, hunting, skiing, snowboarding, ATVs, charters, hiking, etc. Even the MWRs trips and activities offered are predominantly focused on these types of recreational activities.
  - Snowboarding/Ski passes here are also doubled compared to lower 48 like Colorado. An annual pass here costs \$1420 at Alyeska resort, and only \$769 in Breckenridge, CO or Lake Tahoe.
  - Can we replace the performing arts/sporting events with these options instead since hardly anyone participate in those types of recreation here?
- Vehicle “Halogen” lights and Remote starters
  - When extreme weather hits us, the visibility and road hazards are a huge safety issue, members are installing halogen lights for better visibility and remote starters to keep vehicles running. These items are costing anywhere from \$300-600.
- Windshield Repair/Replace
  - Due to the thick ice/snow on the roads here in AK and the requirement to use gravel/rocks instead of “salt” on the road, every car gets their windshield cracked/broken during winter. AK does not allow salt on the road because the

moose comes and eats the salt, which increases the number of car accidents during winter. Average cost to repair/replace is around \$250-500.

- Safety Requirements
  - Every member is briefed during inprocessing about wild life safety and extreme weather conditions. We are recommended to have the following items:
    - Extreme weather emergency bags
    - Bear sprays
    - Rifles/ammo/weapons storage
    - Heated/fleece blankets
    - Spare shovels
    - Back-up generators/car batteries
    - Emergency food buckets, etc.
  - It's highly encouraged in those briefs for members to invest/purchase rifles/shotguns and ammo to protect ourselves from these animals since bear sprays can only do so much, it won't necessarily save your life.
- Fans during summer
  - Since most of the houses on/off-base are not equipped with A/C, members are having to purchase fans during summer.
- Travel tickets/airline expenses
  - Airline tickets are almost double the price coming from this location.
- Earthquake and flood insurance
- Vehicle/Motorcycle Storage fees during winter
- Firewood and propane gas usage during winter
- Vehicle Car Wash and Car Damage Coat
  - To maintain vehicle and minimize rock/gravel damages, members are paying for the "car coat" and putting their cars through car was. But car wash here costs about \$15 per wash.
  - Need for rubberized mat flooring for cars due to excessive exposure to snow, average cost is about \$300-400 per vehicle
- Black-out Shades
  - Due to the extensive sun exposure during summer months, members are purchasing these shades to block the sun and "mimic" night time
- Hunting and Fishing License
  - Due to the high prices of seafood and meat here, members are reverting to fish/hunt for their own food. How do we capture these expenses?
- Satellite phone/GPS hand-held devices
  - Due to the very limited coverage of cell phone services, some members are purchasing satellite phones for safety reasons, especially, during winter months.
- Shipping costs
  - Although, DTMO already adds shipping multiplier to our index, the members want to emphasize how much more shipping costs here coupled with the non-availability of major appliances and other non-household goods that are normally found in CONUS. For instance, washer and dryer inventory from most

stores here are usually around 4-5. Another example would be mattresses; a \$60 single mattress from Walmart will cost you \$40 to ship here, if not available. Companies do not order more than that because of shipping fees. Besides the hassle of waiting for these items to become available, and the shipping costs charged for being stationed here add a significant burden to our service members.

- SAD Lights for Therapy
  - Due to long periods of darkness, members and their families are often seeking medical help for seasonal-affective disorder (SAD) and were always advised to purchase SAD lights for therapy. The recommended usage is about 30 minutes a day, and it costs around \$150 or above. Our winter months lasts anywhere from 8-10 months, and sunlight only lasts about 4 hours a day.
- Veterinary Care/Quarantines/Kennels
  - Fees to accommodate care for pets such as immunizations are almost double the price. Members in Kodiak often opt to fly to Anchorage for vet care because the costs from that are is over 200% higher than in CONUS rates
- Weatherizing Home to include Garages
  - Preparing our homes during winter requires additional expenses to minimize heating bills, i.e. resealing driveways, portable heaters, window covers/seals, etc.

**\*\*NOTE\*\***

A few spouses also brought it to our attention that there are a lot of service members and their families who don't normally qualify for WIC or food stamps in the CONUS, are now qualified and are embarrassingly utilizing these avenues because they cannot afford the cost-of-living here in Alaska.